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Source: *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 47, No. 109 (Jul., 1969), pp. 355-368

Published by: the [Modern Humanities Research Association](#) and [University College London, School of Slavonic and East European Studies](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4206098>

Accessed: 16/06/2014 02:36

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Dubrovnik: the Early Development of a Pre-Industrial City

F. W. CARTER

THE city and civilisation are inseparable: with the city's rise and spread man at last emerged from the primitive state. In turn, the city enabled him to construct an ever more complex way of life and some scholars regard the city as second only to agriculture among the significant inventions in human history. One such type of city is the pre-industrial, or non-industrial city.¹ Not only do pre-industrial cities survive today, but they have been the foci of civilisation from the time of their first appearance in Mesopotamia in the fourth millennium B.C. Even when Europe entered the Dark Ages and city life waned over much of the continent, the Eastern Roman Empire and Spain experienced a vibrant urban life. With the collapse of Roman rule only those portions of Europe under Byzantine or Muslim influence had a flourishing urban life: Byzantium, Preslav, Salonika (Thessaloniki) and the lands along the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea, particularly Dalmatia.

Dalmatia has at all times been essentially a borderland. Geographically it belongs to the eastern peninsula of the Mediterranean, to the Balkan lands. But this narrow strip of coast, as Freeman² states, 'has not a little the air of a thread, a finger, a branch cast forth from the western peninsula'. In its history its character as a march land is still more noticeable, and this feature has always been manifested in a series of civilised communities in the towns, with a hinterland of barbarous or semi-civilised races. Here were the farthest Greek settlements in the Adriatic, settlements placed in the midst of a native uncivilised Illyrian population. Here the Romans came and conquered, but did not wholly absorb the native races. Then the land was disputed between the Eastern and Western Empires, later between Christianity and Islam,³ later still between the eastern and western Churches. The Slav invasion, while almost obliterating the native Illyrian race, could not sweep away the Roman-Greek civilisation of the coast.

The Dalmatian townships had many features in their development similar to those of the towns of Italy, especially of the maritime republics, for in the 9th and 10th centuries the increasing con-

¹ G. Sjöberg, *The Preindustrial City Past and Present*, New York/London, 1965.

² E. A. Freeman, *Historical Essays*, Third Series, London, 1881, pp. 22, 23.

³ C. T. Smith, *An Historical Geography of Western Europe before 1800*, London, 1967, p. 420.

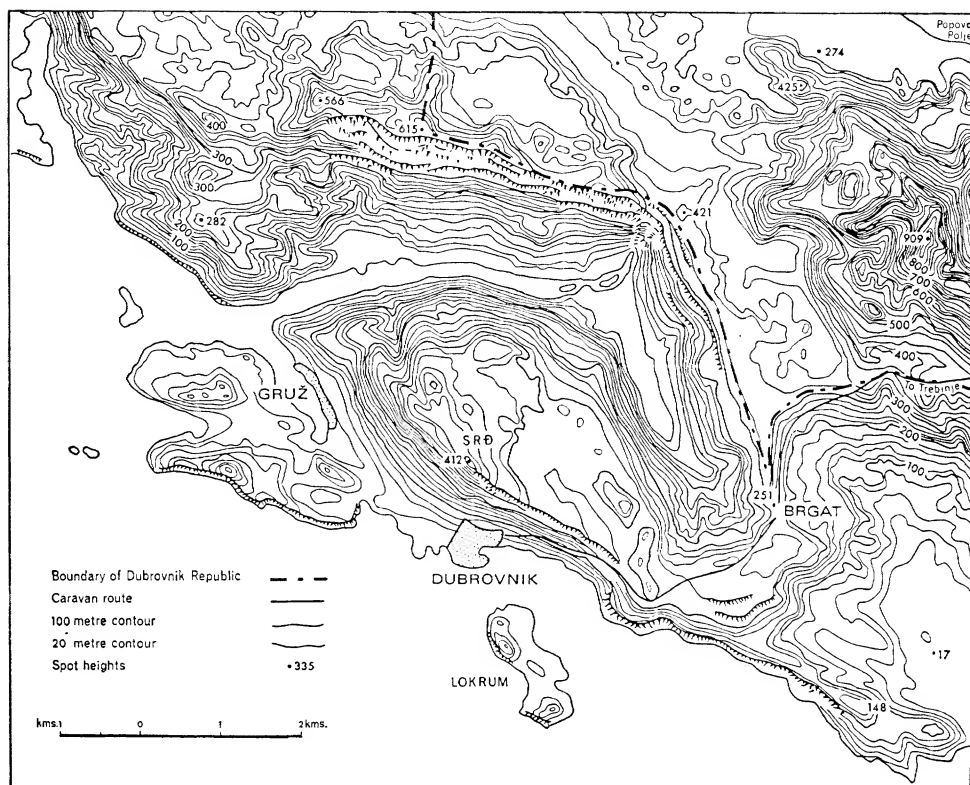


Figure 1. Topographical position of Dubrovnik

solidation of kingdoms, with the ensuing upsurge of commerce, induced a growth of urban communities all over western Europe. Among the first to achieve prominence in this renaissance were the Italian towns of Padua, Venice, Milan, Florence, Pisa and Genoa. Most of them became independent 'city-states' that functioned as intermediaries in the large-scale trade that came to be pursued between Byzantium, the Near East and the Low Countries.⁴ But the Dalmatian townships were always near to the advancing Slav tribes and this fact imparts to their history its peculiar character. They were essentially border fortresses, always aware of the possibilities of attack by the inland Balkan peoples.

Of all these towns, that in which this feature is most marked is Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik's development shows in every way a stronger individuality than that of any other. Three characteristics enabled

⁴ A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, 2nd ed., Madison, Wisconsin, 1952; S. Painter, *A History of the Middle Ages, 284-1500*, New York, 1956; H. Munday and P. Riesenberg, *The Medieval Town*, Princeton, N.J., 1958.

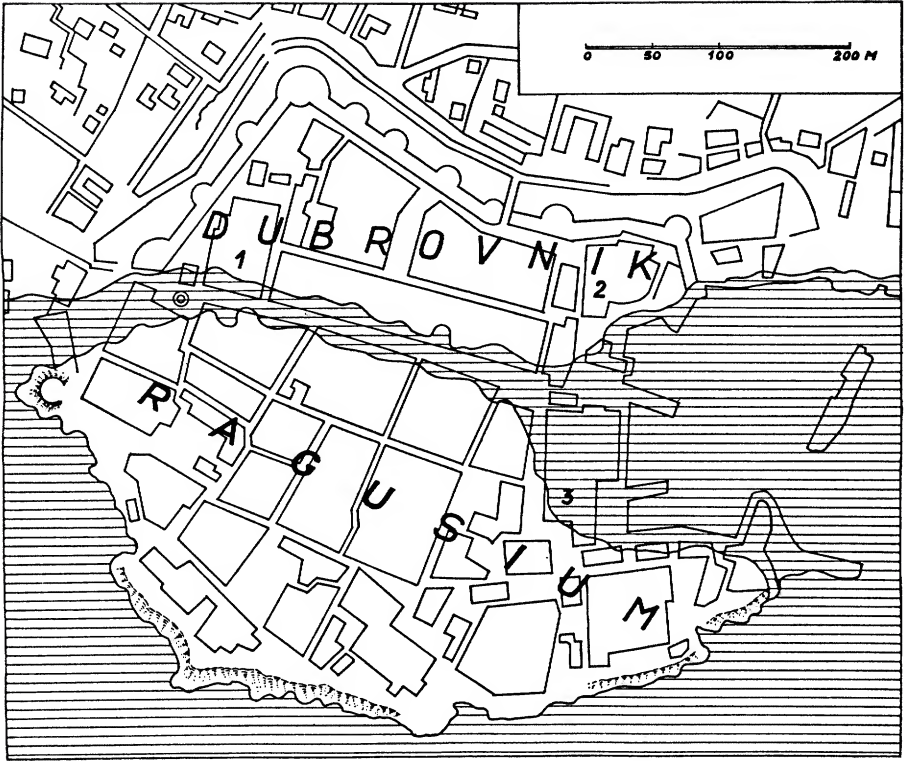


Figure 2 The evolution and structure of the city of Dubrovnik. Note the areas of the sea that were filled in during the Middle Ages.

- (1) Franciscan monastery. (2) Dominican monastery.
(3) Rector's Palace.

it to attain and preserve such a peculiar position in the Adriatic. The first is its geographical situation. Dubrovnik was, as it were, the gate of the East, the meeting point of Latin and Slav, of the eastern and western Churches, of Christian and Muslim. One of the chief commercial highways from the coast to the interior had its terminus at Dubrovnik, while the sheltered position of its harbour, and of that of the neighbouring Gruž, favoured its development as a great commercial centre. Here the Slavs from the interior found their nearest market, and the nearest place where civilisation and culture flourished.

The second principal characteristic of Dubrovnik is its natural position (Fig. 1). It is built partly on a precipitous rocky ridge jutting out into the Adriatic, and partly on the mainland, ascending the steep slopes of Mount Srđ (1,240 feet). The original town

was limited to seaward ridge, which was formerly an island divided from the mainland by a marshy channel, and seemed indeed a suitable place on which to erect a city, in days when security was the first, almost the only, consideration. There was also a settlement of Serbs on Mount Srđ opposite. Thus the whole rock of the seaward ridge was occupied, and surmounted by a wall. The channel which divided it from the mainland soon became a marshy field, and finally dried up (Fig. 2). As a protection against the Slav settlement on Mount Srđ a castle was built by the sea, guarding the bridge to the mainland.⁵ Later the Serbian colony was also absorbed, and the town walls were extended to their present circuit.

A third feature intimately connected with the last was Dubrovnik's character as a haven of refuge. During the troubled centuries following the fall of the Roman Empire no settlement, however large or influential, could feel entirely secure. The Byzantine Emperor Justinian failed to make his northern boundary safe during the 6th century, and the racial and social aspect of the Balkan peninsula gradually changed. The Slavs, of Indo-European stock, first pushed towards the Danube from within the arc of the Carpathian mountains,⁶ at the beginning of the 6th century; by the early 7th century they were able to expel or assimilate the greater part of the existing native population over much of the Balkan lands. The coming of the Slavs profoundly affected the future of the whole Balkan peninsula, especially Dalmatia. Previously the Dinaric mountains had proved a defence against the relatively small bands of marauding Avar cavalry, but the larger scale of the Slav invasion overcame this mountain obstacle.

It was in circumstances such as these that the site of Dubrovnik provided a haven of refuge. Some of the less well-defended maritime cities on the east Adriatic coast, like Salona (near Split) and Epidaurus (a former Roman city seven miles south-east of Dubrovnik, the present-day Cavtat)⁷ offered an obvious target to the invading Slav tribes. They razed Epidaurus to the ground. Refugees from this town formed the new defensive settlement of Dubrovnik⁸ (called by the Romanised population 'Ragusium', and later 'Ragusa'), above the cliffs of what was then still a small island. Subsequently other refugees from all parts of the country helped to increase the population, for the hospitality of its walls was denied to none. There

⁵ The castle and bridge are both indicated on a 12th-century woodcut of Dubrovnik, now in the library of the Franciscan monastery at Dubrovnik.

⁶ W. G. East, *An Historical Geography of Europe*, London, 1947, p. 59; H. Schreiber, *Teuton and Slav*, London, 1965, p. 38.

⁷ E. Falcon-Barker, *1,000 Years under the Sea*, London, 1960.

⁸ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, Bonn, 1898, p. 12.

is at present no evidence to show that the site of Dubrovnik was inhabited before the 7th century A.D., but Dr I. Rubić⁹ suggests that a small Illyrian–Greek settlement may have existed there during the 4th or 3rd centuries B.C.

Of the first two centuries of Dubrovnik's history little is known. The town, like the other Latin communities of Dalmatia, at first formed part of the Eastern Empire. These communities were the better defended maritime cities such as Kotor and Zadar, which, like Dubrovnik, had been able to withstand the Slav invaders and had formed places of refuge for the Romanised population. The Emperor Heraclius had abandoned all the rest of the country to the Slavs, leaving Dalmatia as 'a Slavonic land with an Italian fringe',¹⁰ but even in the coastal towns Imperial authority was becoming ever more shadowy. Under Michael II Balbus they were granted what practically amounted to autonomy, and constituted themselves into city-states of the Italian type.¹¹ These better-defended sites were ever desirous of maintaining their freedom but they were usually obliged to accept the protection of a powerful neighbour. In 806 A.D. the northern portion of Dalmatia was included within the realm of Charlemagne, while the coastal towns (including Dubrovnik) were subject to Byzantine authority. Dubrovnik, although still small, was increasing in size. At that time, with a world of barbarism all round, with numerous wars between the various Slav tribes of the interior, there was indeed an opening for such a haven of refuge as this city offered.

Between 806 and 1358 Dubrovnik gradually consolidated its position as a trading town on the east Adriatic coast, but not without difficulties. Dubrovnik's citizens provided for the defence of their city by surrounding it with walls—'un muro di masiera e travi' ('a wall of rubble and beams')¹²—and these fortifications stood them in good stead by enabling them to hold out against the Saracens, who in 866–7 besieged Dubrovnik for fifteen months. The citizens implored help from the Byzantine Emperor, who at once sent a fleet which relieved the beleaguered city from the raiders.¹³ The Emperor wished to pursue the Saracens into Apulia, where they had established themselves, and the rendezvous for one part of the expedition was Dubrovnik. A large force of Serbs and Croats in the pay of the Empire congregated there, and were transported to the Italian shore in Dubrovnik ships. The expedition was

⁹ Dr I. Rubić, 'Zadar-Split-Dubrovnik' (*Geografski Horizont*, Godina VII, Broj. 1–2, Zagreb, 1961, p. 25).

¹⁰ E. A. Freeman, *The Historical Geography of Europe*, 3rd ed., London, 1903, p. 115.

¹¹ Their municipal statutes present many analogies with those of Italy.

¹² N. Ragnina, *Annali di Ragusa*, Zagreb, 1890, p. 30.

¹³ Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

successful, Bari being recaptured, and the Saracen power in southern Italy broken.¹⁴ This is the first time that Dubrovnik shipping is mentioned in documents.

The original significance of Dubrovnik's defensive position was lost in later years when the channel separating the romanised population on the island from the Slavic settlement on the neighbouring shore, was filled in.¹⁵ Fusion of the Roman and Slav elements of the populations ultimately occurred, but naturally cannot be precisely dated. Petr Skok, the Yugoslav linguist and historian, believes that this fusion took place in the 10th century,¹⁶ coinciding with the victory of the Christians over the pagan Slavs in Dalmatia.

With the fusion of the two settlements and the ensuing peace Dubrovnik was able to continue the commercial functions of the old Epidaurus, for according to Professor J. Roglić, 'everything indicates that this role was not developed on the inaccessible cliffs, where the refugees from Epidaurus took refuge, but that it was inherited from the abandoned city'. In the organisation of the new town a close contact was maintained between the backward shepherds of the hinterland and the richer town merchants. As Roglić states, 'the selection of the site for the new community was not accidental; it was in harmony with earlier experiences', which 'explains the successful and rapid advancement of the new settlement on the defensible but otherwise valueless rocky island'. Roglić further maintains that 'the commercial orientation and close relationship with the hinterland explains the rapid coalescence of the refugee centre of Ragusium with the Slavic settlement'.¹⁷

Dubrovnik's land trade in the Balkan peninsula grew from its immediate hinterland to include much of Bosnia and Serbia, i.e. the Slav principalities of the interior. Already in the 10th century trade was lively in the Balkan peninsula. Merchants from northern Europe to the Near East came via the Danube to the Black Sea, following the well-known Belgrade-Constantinople road. After the 10th century Dubrovnik and Salonika, together with Belgrade and Constantinople, were the four most important towns on the main trade routes of the Balkan peninsula. It is not definitely known when Dubrovnik began to trade with the hinterland, but this is thought

¹⁴ *Ibid.*; M. Mollat, C. Denoix, O. de Prat, *Le navire et l'économie maritime du moyen âge au XVIII^e siècle*, chapter 2; J. Tadić, 'Le port de Raguse et sa flotte au XVI^e siècle', *Travaux du Second Colloque International d'Histoire Maritime*, Paris, 1959, p. 10.

¹⁵ P. Skok, 'Les origines de Raguse' (*Slavia. Časopis pro slovenskou filologii*, Vol. X, Prague, 1931, pp. 449-500); J. Engel & C. Stojanović, *Povijest Dubrovačke republike*, Dubrovnik, 1922, p. 10; B. Stulli, *Pregled državno-pravne historije dubrovačke*, Dubrovnik, 1956, p. 21.

¹⁶ P. Skok, *op. cit.*, p. 474.

¹⁷ J. Roglić, 'The Geographical Setting of Medieval Dubrovnik' in: N. Pounds (ed.) *Geographical Essays on Eastern Europe*, 24, The Hague, 1961, p. 150.

to have been in the 10th century. These trade connections may quite probably have begun earlier, due to the impetus given by coastal trading experience and the fact that Dubrovnik had to extract from a wide hinterland the resources for its very existence, but documentary evidence is lacking to prove this point.

The main areas which entered into Dubrovnik's land trade during this early period of its history were Bosnia and Serbia (Fig. 3). The Ban (Kingdom) of Bosnia was a small state concentrated around the upper reaches of the Vrbas and Bosna rivers. From time to time Dubrovnik made special treaties with its Bosnian neighbours, usually of a commercial character. Kulin (1180–1204), the first great figure in Bosnian history, allowed the trade of his country to be developed by merchants from Dubrovnik. In 1189 he concluded a trade treaty with Dubrovnik giving merchants from the town considerable privileges, including free movement and trade throughout Bosnian territory without the need for customs duty. Much of this early trade consisted of exchanging Bosnian stock-rearing products for salt and Italian manufactured goods.

Throughout its early history Bosnia was an important stock-raising area. The cattle herders practised transhumance, profiting from the short summers in the high limestone mountain pastures, and the warm damp pasture of the coastal areas in the winter months. In a document of 1333 the Ban of Bosnia asked the Dubrovnik government for permission to bring his cattle to the coastal zone during the winter months as Dubrovnik citizens owned the grazing rights in this region.¹⁸ The Vlah shepherds sold the surplus animals to Dubrovnik merchants who bought large quantities of wool, hides and cheese, and fat cattle for slaughter. In 1280 one Vlah shepherd paid a Dubrovnik furrier with a large quantity of cheese for some coats he had made him.¹⁹

In the second half of the 13th century Dubrovnik intensified its trade relations with Bosnia.²⁰ There appears to have been a considerable trade in slaves sent from Bosnia to Dubrovnik, whence they were re-exported to western Europe.²¹ Documents now begin to include other trade commodities. For example, in 1296 one document refers to 350 lbs of wax sent from Vrhbosna (later Sarajevo) to Dubrovnik.²² Another document dated 1296 refers to two loads

¹⁸ I. Sindik, 'Dubrovnik i okolica-naselja i porijeklo stanovništvo' (*Srpski Etnografski Zbornik*, book 38, Belgrade, 1926).

¹⁹ F. Miklošić, *Monumenta Serbica Substantia Historiam Serbiae, Bosniae, Ragusii*, Vienna, 1858, p. 102.

²⁰ Dubrovnik Archives, Statute 1282, Book III, Article 52, *Liber statutorum civitatis Ragusii*.

²¹ Dubrovnik Archives, *Diversa Cancellariae*, 1281–1301 A.D.

²² Dubrovnik Archives, *Diversa Cancellariae*, 1296 A.D.

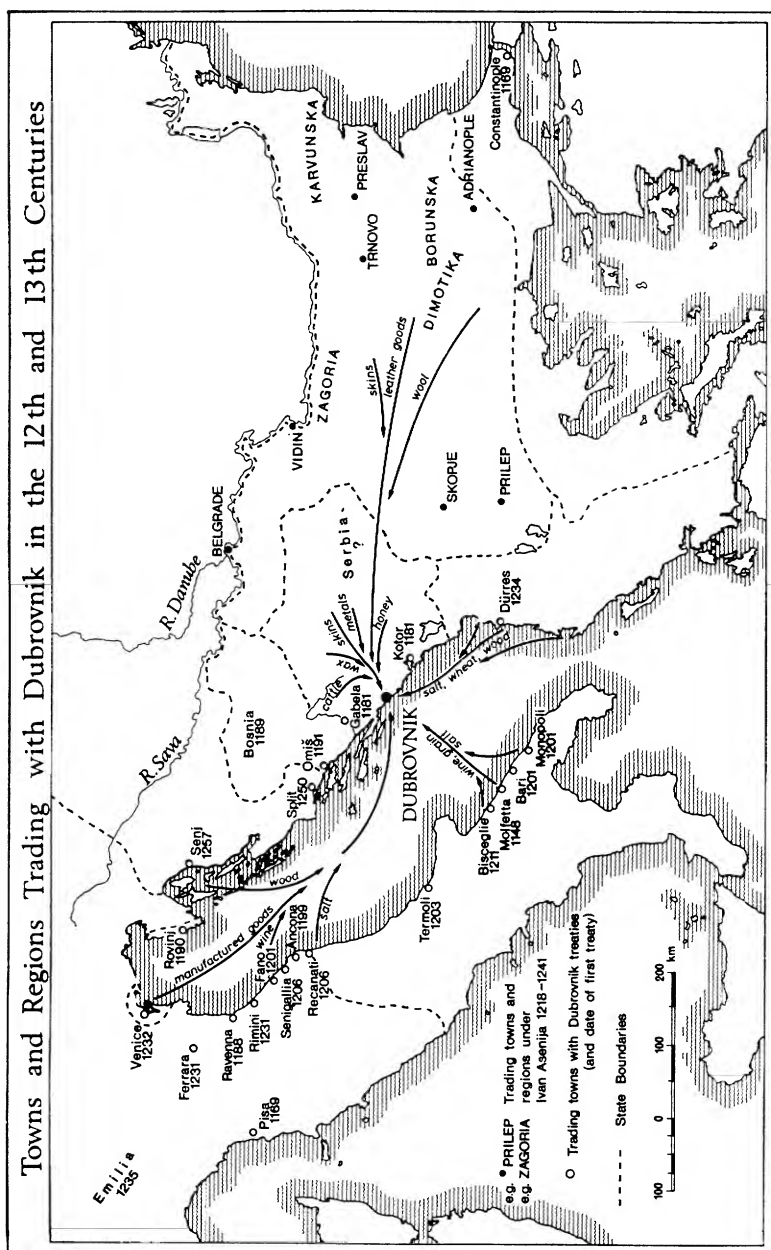


Figure 3.

of wax and a load of dried skins sent from Bosnia to Dubrovnik.²³ In return for these products, Dubrovnik imported and supplied the shepherds with salt. In 1215 salt was imported into Dubrovnik from Dürres in Albania and re-exported to Bosnia,²⁴ and several other documents refer to salt sent from Dubrovnik to Bosnia at the beginning of the 14th century.²⁵ Salt was needed both for the people and their cattle, since it was entirely lacking inland.

More important for Dubrovnik, however, were trade connections with Serbia. This Slav state had been created at the expense of the Byzantine Empire during the Middle Ages and was formed around Dubrovnik. Serbia remained an entirely inland state until the 12th century, when it began to expand seawards, both to the south along the Vardar valley and to the west along the Drin. This expansion brought the Serbian borders up to and around those of Dubrovnik. Stefan Nemanja, Župan of the Serbs, granted Dubrovnik merchants permission to trade in all parts of his dominions, while his own subjects were to be protected at Dubrovnik. This was a valuable commercial treaty, for by the end of the 12th century Serbian territories included northern Albania and Hercegovina, reaching the coast between the Neretva river and Kotor; northwards their expansion was checked by the Ban of Bosnia.

Stefan Dušan, who inherited the Serbian crown in 1331, gave the Serb state its greatest extent. From its focal area about Skoplje, Dušan extended his power mainly southward to include more of northern Albania, Macedonia and northern Greece, but failed to capture the Aegean outlet of Salonika. Of Stefan Dušan, Temperley states that he made 'every effort to encourage commerce and stimulate industry by the importation of foreigners as well as by diplomacy and treaties. Saxons, Ragusans (from Dubrovnik), Venetians, Greeks, Albanians . . . peopled his cities, worked his mines, or garrisoned his fortresses.'²⁶ Good trade relations between Serbia and Dubrovnik continued throughout Dušan's reign until his death in 1355. In Article 118 of his Code, Stefan maintained that 'No man, noble or other, may molest merchants who travel about the Tsar's (his) dominions, nor rob them by force, nor scatter their merchandise, nor take their money by force'. This clause was evidently inserted for the sake of ratification and promulgation from the text of the commercial treaties with Dubrovnik, the party most

²³ Dubrovnik Archives, *Diversa Cancellariae*, 16-24/XII/1296.

²⁴ F. Muller, *Acta et Diplomatica graeca medii aevi*, vol. III, Vienna, 1880, p. 58.

²⁵ Dubrovnik Archives: i. 1319, salt sent from Dubrovnik to Foča in Bosnia (*Reformationes*, VI, folder 51); ii. 1329, salt sent from Dubrovnik to Drijeva in Bosnia (*Diversa Cancellariae*, IX, folder 94); iii. 7/V/1331, salt sent from Dubrovnik to Bosnia (*Reformationes*, X, folder 17).

²⁶ H. W. V. Temperley, *History of Serbia*, London, 1919, p. 65.

vitaly interested in the trade of Dušan's dominions, as the security of their numerous agents, depôts and caravans was of capital importance. Even at the very beginning of his reign, before he assumed the imperial title, Dušan issued a decree prohibiting anyone from hindering the men of Dubrovnik from dealing freely in meat and corn, 'under fear of the king's displeasure'.²⁷ Much of the trade was a direct exchange of raw materials, metals (especially lead and silver),²⁸ wax, wool, honey, hides and the products of domestic handicrafts, for manufactured Italian goods, mainly in the form of textiles and salt.²⁹

Early trade relations existed between Dubrovnik and Bulgaria.³⁰ After 1186 the second Bulgarian Empire was formed from part of that of Byzantium. Conflict arose between the Bulgarians and the Franks, who held Constantinople, and this indirectly affected Dubrovnik's trade with Bulgaria. Venice was an ally and staunch supporter of the Franks, so much so that in 1256 the Venetian fleet made a surprise attack on the Bulgarian coastal town of Mesembria. This event ruined Venice's chances of establishing commercial relations with Bulgaria and even jeopardised the trading prospects of their fellow Italian merchants, the Genoese, who after this date rarely ventured into the Black Sea. Apparently Italian commerce neglected Bulgaria during the 13th century, thus creating less competition for Dubrovnik's traders. The latter also had the advantage of sharing with the Bulgarians a common Slavonic origin, which assured them a good reception. Tsar Ivan Asen II (1218–41) called the traders from Dubrovnik 'his beloved and trusted guests' and gave them important trade privileges, as is seen from the following document:

The Emperor gives Dubrovnik the authority to bring their goods to Vidin, Trnovo, and to Zagorija, or to Preslav, Karvunska, Borunska, Odrin (Adrianople), Dimotika, Skoplje or Prilep, Albania and Solun and there to buy and sell their goods. Signed—Asen, Tsar in Bulgaria and Greece, 1230 A.D.³¹

²⁷ M. Burr, 'The Code of Stephen Dusan' (*The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. XXVIII, no. 70, 1950, pp. 198 *et seq.*).

²⁸ Dubrovnik Archives: *i.* II/V/1333, 51 litres of silver sent from Novo Brdo to Venice via Dubrovnik (*Diversa Cancellariae*, 10, folder 23); *ii.* 21/I/1355, 14 litres of auriferous silver sent from Novo Brdo to Venice via Dubrovnik (*Diversa Cancellariae*, 12, folder 30). *iii.* 20/XI/1336, silver worth 191½ perpera (64 ducats) was sent from Novo Brdo to Dubrovnik (*Debita Notariae*, 2, folder 129).

²⁹ F. Miklosić, *Monumenta Serbica* . . . , p. 38: *i.* 1253, Dubrovnik merchants sold salt to people from Raška (Central Serbia). *ii.* Dubrovnik Archives: *a.* 18/VI/1318, salt sent from Dubrovnik to Serbia (*Reformationes*, 6, folder 5); *b.* 1319, salt sent from Dubrovnik to Serbia (*Reformationes*, 8, folder 7).

³⁰ Dr I. Sakazov, *Obshtestveno i stopansko razvitie na Blgariya pri Asenevtsit*, Sofia, 1930, p. 114.

³¹ F. Miklosić, *Monumenta Serbica*, p. 2.

In 1253 these privileges were renewed on the conclusion of a political alliance with Dubrovnik.³²

The citizens of Dubrovnik were essentially commercial people, and trade, both inland and sea-borne, formed the chief source of their wealth.³³ In the Byzantine (806–1205) and Venetian (1205–1358) periods, however, only the germs of their future commercial development are found. We have already alluded to the part played by Dubrovnik shipping in the Greek expedition to Apulia in 848 A.D.; there were other examples in the following centuries, but the vessels were small, and the sea-borne trade had a very limited character. Navigation was of three kinds: coastal traffic, navigation ‘intra Culfum’ (within the Adriatic), and navigation ‘extra Culfum’.³⁴ Coastal traffic was carried on between the Molunat peninsula (north-west of Kotor Bay) and the Ston Kanal (35 km north-west of Dubrovnik), a distance of about 70 kilometres in all, with ten harbours. Navigation ‘intra Culfum’, which extended from the vicinity of Split to Apulia and Dürres in Albania, was of considerable importance during the Byzantine epoch. Fine Milan cloths, skins, tar and canvas for sails were brought on Dubrovnik ships from the ports of the Marche and Apulia and forwarded to all parts of the Eastern Empire and the Slavonic lands.

By the 12th century Dubrovnik’s overseas trade must already have been important, for the Arab geographer Idrisi noted (in 1153) that ‘Dubrovnik was a large maritime town whose population were hard-working craftsmen and possessed a large fleet which travelled to different parts’.³⁵ This statement is supported by 12th- and 13th-century³⁶ trading treaties from the Dubrovnik archives, which show that trade was carried on between Dubrovnik and the western Adriatic coast (Molfetta, 1148; Termoli, 1203; Ancona, 1199; Venice, 1232) together with Pisa, 1169, and the region of Emilia, 1235 (Fig. 3), but do not specify the commodities transported. They indicate that by the 13th century Dubrovnik was an important trading town. According to the Yugoslav geographer Petr Matković, ‘it is possible that, before there were written documents between these towns, treaties by word of mouth existed between Dubrovnik, Sicily and the mid-Italian towns.’³⁷

³² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³³ I. Manken, *Dubrovački Patricijat u XIV Veku* (Srpska Akademija Nauka i Umetnosti, Posebna Izdanja Kniga CCCXL. Odeljenje Društvenih Nauka, Kniga 36, Belgrade, 1960, pp. 23–7).

³⁴ G. Gelcich, *Delle Istituzioni Marittime e Secritarie delle Repubblica di Ragusa*, Trieste, 1892, p. 3.

³⁵ W. Tomashek, ‘Zur Kunde der Haemus Halbinsel’, in *Sitzungsberichte der phil.-hist. Classe der Kaiserlichen Akademie*, Bd. 113, Vienna, 1881, p. 61.

³⁶ Dubrovnik Archives: i. 15/IX/1229, safe conduct granted to Ragusan citizens trading in Fermo (*Facsimile II*, no. 53); ii. 3/III/1231, safe conduct to Ragusan merchants coming to Rimini (*Facsimile III*, no. 242); iii. 26/III/1231, safe conduct for all merchants

Examination of a document embodying an agreement between Ancona and Dubrovnik (4 April 1292) reveals details of some of the goods transported. For instance 'the Ragusan can bring in freely from Slavonia [which the document defines as land between the Naretva and Drin-Bojana rivers] leather goods, domestic and wild hides, wax and pelts (both wild and domestic) and can sell them to the Anconians tax free'; and again, 'grain can be imported into Ancona from Slavonia by Dubrovnik boats,' whilst in the reverse direction 'if Anconians carry wine and salt to Ragusa [Dubrovnik] or its district they may export it beyond Ragusa free of duty'. Tax was levied on two commodities, silk and rope-cordage, which Dubrovnik merchants imported from Ancona, but the reason for this is not given. Moreover Ragusans 'who carry or cause to be carried goods into Ancona from Tuscany, Lombardy and Roman-diola [region of present-day Romagna] and the whole seaboard of these places, by land or sea shall pay Anconian taxes but as for merchandise from Apulia, let it continue as before, as regards wheat, grain, wine, salt and articles made of wood, which they bring into Ancona.'³⁸ This shows that by the 13th century Dubrovnik's citizens were transporting valuable and much needed goods, not only between the Balkan peninsula and Italy, but also between Italian markets themselves, and that her merchants were therefore important trading intermediaries.

All trade to places situated beyond the Adriatic Sea came under the heading of navigation 'extra Culfum', which began to grow to important proportions in the 13th century. The Levant trade became extremely active. From the commercial provisions contained in the various treaties between Dubrovnik and Venice³⁹ it can be seen that the former traded with all parts of the Eastern Empire, Syria, Tunis, Barbary, Italy, Sicily and Egypt. At Constantinople the Latin Emperors, Baldwin I and Henry, granted Dubrovnik citizens the privilege of having a colony in the city. Her merchants traded especially with the Morea, and the feudal duchy of Chiarenza or Clarence, in the Peloponnese. From these places they brought

from Ragusa coming to Senna (modern Senigallia) and district (*Facsimile II*, no. 55); *iv.* 1/VIII/1235, safe conduct to 'our chosen friends' of Ravenna to trade in Ragusa and district on the same footing as citizens of Ragusa (*Facsimile II*, no. 62); *v.* 24/V/1249, safe conduct for all merchants and merchandise of Ragusa trading in Fanum (modern Fano). Similar grants to be made by Ragusa within two months (*Facsimile II*, no. 140); *vi.* 6/V/1249, Ragusans permitted to trade at Firmum and Port of St George for five years, free of customs and exactions (*Facsimile III*, no. 167).

³⁷ V. Foretić, 'Nekoliko pogleda na pomorsku trgovinu Dubrovnika u srednjem vijeku', *Dubrovačko Pomorstvo*, Dubrovnik, 1952, p. 119.

³⁸ P. Matković, 'Prilozi k trgovačko-političkoj historiji republike dubrovačke' (*Rad*, XV, Zagreb, 1871, pp. 54-5).

³⁹ T. Smičiklas, 'Codex diplomaticus regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae et Slavoniae', Zagreb, 1905, III. p. 354; IV, 1906, pp. 8-11.

silk to Ancona and other parts of Italy. At the same time they kept up their connection with the Greek princes who held sway over the fragments of the Greek Empire, namely the Emperors of Nicaea and Trebizond⁴⁰ and the despots of Epirus. After the capture of Constantinople by the Latins, Epirus continued to hold out against their arms, and was ruled by the despots Michael I (died 1214), Manuel (1214–41) and Michael II (1241–71), all of whom granted valuable privileges to merchants of Dubrovnik.⁴¹ When the Greek Empire was re-established in 1261 all the exemptions and privileges were reconfirmed, first by Michael Palaeologus and later in 1322 by Andronicus II.⁴²

With regard to Egypt and Syria little information exists before 1280, the time when documents began to be conscientiously preserved in the Dubrovnik archives. Dubrovnik ships were too small and weak to make the longer journeys to the Near East, but a Dubrovnik merchant is recorded as making the voyage to Acre, via Constantinople and Cyprus, in 1143 on a Venetian boat.⁴³ In 1224 Egypt was placed under interdict and the Venetians forbade Dubrovnik's citizens to trade 'in terra Alexandriae vel Egypti'.⁴⁴ Dubrovnik merchants before starting on a journey had to swear that they would not visit Egypt, but in all probability the prohibition was often disregarded.⁴⁵ Subsequent attempts to enforce the interdict were equally unsuccessful. The object of the prohibition was above all to prevent the Egyptian sultans from obtaining timber and iron, which were rare in their own country, for military purposes. Traders were attracted by the enormous profits of the venture, for which they were willing to brave ecclesiastical displeasure. For example in 1304 three Dubrovnik merchants were captured while engaged in illicit traffic with Alexandria, and were granted absolution by the Pope.⁴⁶

Thus Dubrovnik, blessed with a good natural position on the coast, and a safe haven of refuge, went through its embryonic stages of commercial development between the seventh and fourteenth centuries. It satisfied the prerequisites for the emergence of

⁴⁰ The documents on this subject are lost, but the privileges are frequently mentioned by later writers.

⁴¹ R. Tafel and G. Thomas, 'Griechische Urkunden' in *Sitzungsberichte der Kaiserlichen Wiener Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Classe*, Vienna, 1851, vol. VI, pp. 508–29.

⁴² W. Heyd, *Histoire du Commerce du Levant au Moyen Age*, Leipzig, 1923, vol. I, p. 475.

⁴³ R. Morozzo della Rocca and A. Lombardo (eds.), *Regesta chartarum Italiae. Documenti del commercio veneziano nei secoli XI–XIII*, Rome, 1940, vol. I, pp. 85–6.

⁴⁴ S. Ljubić, *Historija o odnošajih između Južnoga Slavenstva i Mletačke Republike*, vol. I, pp. 33–4.

⁴⁵ V. Makušev, *Monumenta historica Slavorum Meridionalium*, Warsaw, 1874, vol. I, p. 40; W. Heyd, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 308.

⁴⁶ A. Theinen, *Vetera Monumenta Slavorum Meridionalium historiam illustrantia*, vol. I, Zagreb, 1875, p. 121; M. A. Andreeva, 'Torgovyy dogovor Vizantii i Dubrovnika i istoriya yego podgotovki' (*Byzantinoslavica*, vol. VI, Prague, 1935–1936, p. 139).

a pre-industrial city, namely 'a situation conducive to repeated contacts among peoples of divergent cultures',⁴⁷ which in turn permitted a constant accretion of social and technological skills in the area, and the emergence, through its merchant class, 'of a well-developed social organisation, particularly in the political and economic spheres'.⁴⁸ Until the beginning of the 13th century Dubrovnik, like most of Dalmatia, was under the control of the Byzantine Empire. She found herself surrounded on all her land frontiers by powerful Slav states which were at times friendly, but envied her wealth and above all her splendid port, of which they tried on more than one occasion to gain possession. With the weakening of the Byzantine power and the creation of independent Slavonic states in the interior, Dubrovnik accepted the protection, in 1205, of the then powerful republic of Venice. For a century and a half Dubrovnik attempted to establish more favourable relations with the envious and unscrupulous Venetian Republic, while at the same time making the most of her position by expanding her sea-borne trade and by exploiting her Slavonic hinterland for commercial purposes.⁴⁹ After the victory of King Ludovik of Hungary and Croatia over the Venetians in 1358, Dubrovnik passed under the protection of the Hungarian kings and entered into a new phase of her development.

⁴⁷ G. Sjöberg, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴⁹ F. W. Carter, 'The Decline of the Dubrovnik City-State' (*Balkan Studies*, IX, 1, Thessalonika, 1968, pp. 127-38).